

APPENDIX A

TOWN OF COLMA SUMMARY OF PUBLIC OUTREACH for the SHORT-TERM ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Appendix A

SUMMARY AND FINDINGS OF PUBLIC OUTREACH EFFORTS

A. OVERVIEW

In 2008, the Town of Colma developed a business and public outreach plan to engage business owners and residents affected by the Town's economic development efforts. At their meeting of February 11, 2009, the Colma City Council reviewed the proposed goals and the planning process for the Short-Term Economic Development Strategy and approved them.

The public engagement process began with distributing two separate surveys between March and June 2009: one survey was sent to all Colma households and also used to interview Colma shoppers; and one was designed for businesses. The resident and shopper surveys were focused on public opinion about existing commercial businesses, shopping preferences and potential ideas for new businesses. The business survey was designed to obtain information on the existing business climate and if there are particular improvements that could be made to strengthen Colma business, including business sectors that could be introduced or expanded. Since only 19 completed surveys were received from the business community, 14 one-on-one interviews were conducted in July 2009 with key businesses that had expressed interest in being involved in development of the Strategy.

In addition to the surveys, the public outreach effort included a public workshop held on May 4, 2009, which used breakout groups to discuss and suggest the Goals and the Action Items for the Strategy. Following the workshop, a Resident Focus Group met on July 15, 2009 to refine the Goals and the proposed Action Items designed to implement Goals and to determine if there were other issues to consider prior to finalizing the Strategy. Input received during public outreach was incorporated into the development of the Goals and Action Items that form the Economic Development Strategy.

A variety of "common threads" emerged from the process, highlighting issues of concern such as: the global, national and local economic downturn, vacant or underutilized properties, lack of local grocery stores, and need for additional restaurants and infrastructure improvements to improve access. Public comment also included positive feedback on Colma's business-friendly environment and sense of community, proximity to large populations from which businesses can draw customers, ample parking and healthy mix of businesses.

The following sections summarize the key findings from the public outreach and describe in more detail the steps in the public outreach.

B. KEY FINDINGS

In summary, the findings from the surveys, the one-on-one interviews with businesses, and the workshop were as follows:

- Finding a) Colma has significant community assets key to economic development, including its accessibility, its pro-business Town government, and the Town's sense of pride and community.
- Finding b) There are several advantages to having a business in Colma, including ample parking infrastructure, proximity to regional freeways, and a mix of both national chains and smaller local businesses.
- Finding c) Local businesses in Colma are currently concerned with both local and national economic issues, ranging from the vacant parcels and businesses in Colma, to Colma's mix of old and new businesses and development, to unemployment and the national credit crunch.
- Finding d) Local businesses are interested in programs that improve transportation access and infrastructure, marketing and branding campaigns, and streamlined business and development permitting.
- Finding e) Colma residents and shoppers are interested in attracting new businesses to Colma; especially neighborhood-serving uses such as a grocery store and post-office, to national discount retail chains that can generate significant sales tax revenue.

C. DESCRIPTION OF SURVEYS

Between March and June, 2009, Colma distributed surveys to Colma businesses and residents, and also administered surveys to non-residents shopping in Colma. The surveys were designed to solicit specific and somewhat detailed feedback on preferences, advantages/disadvantages of Colma, as well as precise information regarding issues facing businesses and consumers. The survey included multiple choice, "yes/no", and short answer type questions.

In total, 140 surveys were received, including 103 surveys from residents, 19 from Colma businesses, and 18 from non-resident shoppers. Fourteen follow-up in-person interviews with businesses were conducted in late July 2009, which provided more in-depth information from the local business perspective. The findings from each of the responding groups are summarized below.

1. Summary of Resident and Shopper Survey Responses

In total, the Town received or administered 121 surveys, including 103 from Colma residents and an additional 18 from non-residents shopping in Colma. Of the non-resident shoppers, 1 was a resident of San Bruno, 3 were residents of Pacifica, 4 were residents of Daly City, 1 was a resident of South San Francisco and 9 were residents of San Francisco.

The summary responses from the Resident and Shopper Surveys are:

1. Residents shop in Colma at least once each week, or several times each week, while surveyed non-residents shopped in Colma approximately once each month.
2. Residents report they shop in Colma because stores are close to their home and the businesses where they want to shop are located in Colma. Surveyed non-residents report they shop in Colma because the businesses they want are located in Colma.
3. The stores both residents and non-residents list as visiting most frequently are **Target, Home Depot, Kohl's, Bed Bath & Beyond, Best Buy and Marshalls**, in that order.
4. When asked which stores they wish were available in Colma, responses include the following specific chains, stores or services:

99 Cent Store	Home Goods	Nugget Market
Andersen's Bakery	IKEA	Pak N Save
American Apparel	In N Out Burger	Peet's
Banana Republic	JC Penney	Pet Club
Big Lots	K-Mart	Safeway
Borders	Little Caesar's	Sanraku (sushi restaurant)
Cheeseburger Cheeseburger	Loehmann's	Sears
Chuck E Cheese	Long's	Staples
Costco	Lowes	Starbucks
Dave and Buster's	Lunardi's	Taco Bell
Draeger's or Ralph's Supermarkets	McDonald's	Toys R Us
DSW	Mi Pueblo	Walgreen's
Food Maxx	Molly Stone's	Walmart
Fry's	Olive Garden	Whole Foods
Gap		

5. The majority of respondents agreed with the following statements:
 - a. If more restaurants were in Colma, I would probably patronize them.
 - b. I feel like Colma has a strong Town identity.
 - c. When I shop at Colma businesses, parking is easy.
 - d. When I shop in Colma, I usually visit more than one store or business in a single trip.

- e. I recommend Colma businesses to my friends, neighbors and coworkers.
 - f. I like the look and feel of Colma.
 - g. I shop in Colma because the stores and businesses here are affordable.
6. The majority or close to the majority of respondents make most of their purchases in the following categories at Colma businesses:
- a. Clothing
 - b. Household items
 - c. Books, CDs or DVDs
 - d. Gifts
 - e. Electronics
 - f. Items related to a specific hobby (i.e. video games, crafts, cooking, etc.)
7. In addition to answering the multiple choice survey questions, many respondents also left additional comments. These comments included several requesting a grocery store, and requests to fill existing vacant parcels and buildings.

2. Business Owner Survey Findings

The Town received a total of 19 surveys from businesses located along Mission Road, Serramonte Boulevard, Serra Center or 280 Metro Center, El Camino Real, Collins Avenue, Colma Boulevard, Hillside Boulevard and within a residential neighborhood, and Planning staff conducted 14 one-on-one interviews. The businesses responses can be grouped as follows:

Type of Business	Surveys
Cemetery and cemetery-related businesses	6
Auto dealerships and related businesses	5
Personal service businesses	2
General retail businesses	2
Construction-related businesses	4
TOTAL:	19

Findings from the Business Owner Survey include:

1. When asked to identify up to 3 issues or concerns facing Colma businesses, the most common answers were:
 - ✓ Competition from other cities, businesses and industries,
 - ✓ Business attraction and recruitment, and
 - ✓ Business retention.
2. When asked to identify up to 3 specific projects or actions that businesses would like to see in Colma, the most common answers were:
 - ✓ Fill existing vacancies,

- ✓ Brand Colma with a specific identity or sense of place, and
 - ✓ Create a Town-wide marketing campaign.
3. When asked to identify Colma attributes that provided advantages to Colma businesses, the most common answers were
- ✓ Freeway access,
 - ✓ Location and proximity to BART, and
 - ✓ SamTrans bus routes.
4. When asked which kinds of development or uses Colma businesses would like to see in the Town, the most common answers were:
- ✓ Restaurants,
 - ✓ Value-based or off-price retailers, and
 - ✓ Grocery stores.
5. When asked which kinds of development or uses Colma businesses would NOT like to see in the Town, the most common answers were:
- ✓ Value-based or off-price retailers,
 - ✓ Convenience stores, and
 - ✓ Open space.
6. When asked 'what is the single most important thing Colma could do right now for Colma businesses', answers included:
- a. Lower rents.
 - b. Town government could be more business friendly.
 - c. Help bring customers to Colma.
 - d. Market Colma as a necropolis - there is no other city in the US like it.
 - e. Lower taxes.
 - f. Less city government.
 - g. Create a business directory on the City website.
 - h. Pressure landlords to fill vacancies.
 - i. City should pay for an electronic sign by the freeway to advertise businesses.
 - j. Invite businesses to community events.
 - k. Lower property taxes and lower lease rates.

It should be noted that some of these items, such as lower commercial rents, are not under the Town's control.

D. IN-PERSON BUSINESS INTERVIEWS

Over the course of a week in July 2009, Andrea Ouse, the previous City Planner, met individually with fourteen Colma businesses. The business sectors included in the interviews were:

- Cemeteries
- Auto dealerships
- General Retail
- Manufacturing/Light Industrial

The interviews were informal and loosely structured on the written surveys sent out earlier, and the draft Goals. The following is a summary of the interviews, by sector:

1. Cemeteries

1. Museum-like atmosphere is one reason people visit Colma.
2. Green spaces like those provided in Colma's cemeteries are part of what make Colma an attractive place to visit.
3. Colma's history is nationally unique and should be more effectively marketed with Town support.
4. The incorporation of more flowers in the Town's medians and at gateway locations would provide a better connection to the cemeteries and to Colma's flower-growing history.

2. Auto Dealerships

1. The most prevalent issue with all auto dealerships interviewed was the lack of signage and visibility on Highway 280 leading customers to Serramonte Auto Row.
2. Additional traffic needs to be generated on Serramonte Boulevard. It does not matter if that traffic is generated by non-auto sales land uses.
3. More "family-style" restaurants are necessary on and around Serramonte Auto Row to capture auto dealership and service customers.
4. A coordinated marketing plan to promote Serramonte Auto Row is necessary.
5. Vacant properties are a problem; a majority of the auto dealerships interviewed did not believe that Serramonte Boulevard vacancies will be occupied by auto dealerships, due to a contracting market and corporate distance restrictions.
6. Programs that focus on business-to-business relationships, such as cross-promotional discounts at Colma businesses, should be considered.

3. General Retail

1. Vacant commercial properties are a primary issue. Competition actually helps many of the businesses interviewed.

2. The Town government in Colma has been very good to retailers, according to those interviewed. It is appreciated when the Mayor and Council members, City Manager and Police Officers check in with retailers to find out how things are going.
3. A coordinated marketing program to advertise Colma as a shopping destination is necessary to increase shopping traffic.
4. In some cases, the Town should work with shopping center property management to make aesthetic improvements and to ensure common area maintenance.
5. Most retailers felt that a business-to-business network could help cross-promote services and products to the consumer, while keeping the consumer in Colma.

4. Manufacturing/Light Industrial

1. Regional competition is hurting this sector of Colma businesses.
2. There is value to having local competition in a specific sector (e.g., monument makers).
3. Marketing plan could include organized tours of manufacturing activities.
4. The Town government in Colma has been supportive of manufacturing uses over the years, particularly with monument makers.

E. COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

On May 4, 2009, a Community Workshop was conducted for both residents and representatives of the local business community. The workshop was held at the Colma Community Center and approximately 25 participants attended. Approximately one-third of attendees identified themselves as residents or shoppers, one-third identified themselves as local business owners, and the remaining third identified themselves as belonging to both categories. Several Council Members were also present to observe but did not participate in the workshop activities.

The Workshop encouraged participants to brainstorm solutions to common economic issues and describe the needs of local businesses, Colma residents and shoppers. Attendees participated in activities, led by Colma staff members, designed to generate information and ideas. Each workshop activity is described in detail below, along with each activity's key findings.

Activity 1: Colma's Economic Future

In this activity, participants used a combination of post-it note brainstorming and discussion to answer the following questions posed by the facilitator, the answers to which are summarized below.

What are Colma's primary assets?

1. Accessible and safe parking.
2. Good business climate, with friendly businesses, good discount stores and lots of visitors.
3. Ease of transportation and access; Colma is located within minutes of San Francisco, BART stations and is easy to get to by freeway or by the street network.
4. Small town atmosphere with a strong sense of community.
5. Town government that is pro-business, supportive and provides for the safety of its residents through good police and fire service.
6. High levels of maintenance and good aesthetic environment; the Town is well kept, quiet and clean.
7. Benefits for residents.
8. Existing local businesses include a variety of shops, Target, small community stores, and good merchants.



Previous City Planner Andrea Ouse welcomes workshop participants, discusses the need for economic development, and describes the workshop.

What should be Colma's economic priorities?

1. Improving transportation and transportation infrastructure, such as a shuttle or plans for anticipating future traffic flow increases.
2. Supporting existing businesses to provide continuity of our existing commercial core, including Auto Row.
3. Streamlining the permit and approval process for new businesses and new development.



In Activity 1, participants brainstormed Colma's assets and economic priorities.

4. Identifying and courting new businesses, especially those businesses and services that Colma currently does not have (restaurants, grocery stores, etc.), businesses that would generate sales tax, and businesses that add to a vibrant mix of retail and service opportunities.

Other suggestions included developing a permanent home for the Chamber of Commerce within Colma, developing Colma into a 'Green Hub' for sustainable businesses, providing more recreational opportunities and amenities and increasing the size of Colma by annexing adjacent land.

Activity 2: Colma's Local Business Climate

In this activity, participants were asked to discuss and identify concerns facing local businesses as well as to define solutions to these concerns. Participants engaged in group discussions to answer the following questions. Their responses are summarized below.

What are the primary advantages and disadvantages of locating a business in Colma?

1. Advantages to locating a business in Colma include:

- a. We have good 'business climate components,' such as a nice retail facilities, a supportive Town government, and a family atmosphere.
- b. Excellent freeway access to businesses.
- c. Traffic to our national chains helps our small businesses; and our national chains have good name recognition.
- d. Close proximity to BART.
- e. Fairly smooth permitting processes.
- f. Parking availability.
- g. Convenient location for businesses.
- h. El Camino Real has name recognition.



Notes from Activity 2 identifying advantages and disadvantages.

2. Disadvantages to locating a business in Colma include:

- a. Lack of name recognition or strong and positive name recognition; Colma is only associated with cemeteries.
- b. Cemetery land use does not provide tax revenue to the Town.
- c. Cemetery traffic is not being captured by other businesses.
- d. Town provides residents with lots of benefits, but not many benefits for businesses.
- e. While the permitting process is good, it could be better.
- f. No major draw.

- g. No good pedestrian connection between Colma residences and Colma businesses.
- h. Poor signage.
- i. Poor public transportation in commercial areas.

What are the most pressing concerns facing local businesses today?

- 1. Current vacancies (especially along Auto Row) and abandoned properties.
- 2. Defining the appropriate balance between old and new businesses and development.
- 3. High levels of unemployment
- 4. The current credit crunch; inability to secure loans and money.
- 5. Heavy traffic along El Camino Real is not conducive to a safe and inviting place for pedestrians.
- 6. Uncontrolled lease rates.
- 7. Need better signage and advertising.
- 8. Town is too skewed towards auto uses.
- 9. Need more diversity in our business mix (and our retail mix specifically).

Activity 3: Colma's Consumer Climate

In the third activity, participants were asked to discuss and identify the needs of shoppers as well as evaluate the Colma shopping experience. Participants used post-it notes for brainstorming and facilitated discussion to answer the following questions. Responses are summarized, in order of importance, below.

Why do you shop where you do?

- 1. Location factors that impact where we shop include:
 - a. Whether the business is closer to my home or work.
 - b. Whether or not the business is easily accessible by car and the freeway.
 - c. Whether or not the business is close to others that I want to visit.
- 2. Design factors that impact where we shop include:
 - a. Whether the stores are easily accessible.
 - b. Whether there is ample and safe parking.
- 3. Specific shops and services that impact where we shop include:
 - a. The overall store selection.
 - b. Target and Kohl's - stores with a variety of goods.
 - c. Stores that are smaller and friendlier than others.
 - d. Operating hours of specific stores.
 - e. The diversity of the stores.

What actions, businesses or services would encourage you to shop in Colma more often?

1. Farmer's market-inspired community events or festivals.
2. Grocery store, especially a health food store or "Whole Foods" type of store.
3. Kids play places - place to host parties.
4. Education or vocational services.
5. Provision of family discounts.
6. Shuttles or public transit.
7. A "Shop Colma" type marketing campaign.
8. Coffee shops.
9. Big name stores.
10. Theater.
11. A Goodwill or St. Vincent de Paul thrift store.
12. Family restaurants or fine dining establishments.

F. RESIDENT FOCUS GROUP

After gathering all of the feedback from residents, shoppers and business owners at the Community Workshop, the Planning Department developed the following draft Goals to respond to the recommendations and concerns summarized from all outreach efforts:

1. Proposed Goals¹

- Retain and enhance existing auto-related businesses
- Retain and attract value based and off-price retailers at existing shopping centers
- Increase dining opportunities at existing buildings
- Retain and attract neighborhood-serving retail uses at existing shopping centers
- Increase prevalence of grocery stores, produce market, thrift stores, pharmacies
- Develop and implement a marketing and branding plan for Colma, to bring shoppers to Colma, help draw attention to Colma's unique identity
- Identify opportunities to streamline development permit process for new and existing businesses

On July 15, 2009, a Resident Focus Group² was held to discuss and comment on the draft Goals. Planning staff presented a summary of the economic development efforts and the

¹ At the focus group meeting, Goals were labeled "Action Items" and the implementing actions were called "Programs." In preparing this draft document, the references were changed.

² The Resident Focus Group consisted of all the people who came to the July 15, 2009 meeting. The invitation to the meeting went to all Colma residents and was the same mailing list used for the May 4, 2009 Workshop.

draft Goals to the fifteen attendees and three City Council members. After the presentation, the group was asked the following discussion questions on each of the Goals:

- *What is your impression of these recommended Goals?*
- *Do the Goals respond to the outreach findings?*
- *Do they respond to the needs of the residents and businesses?*
- *What changes do you see happening if we move forward with these proposed Goals?*

Below is a collective response to the actions items and discussions questions from the Resident Focus Group:

- They liked the idea of maintaining Serramonte Auto Row, but thought that diversified dealerships that responded to current market trends (such as brands focusing on “green” technology) would draw more shoppers to the area.
- The group expressed interest in the concept of offering incentives to shoppers to purchase vehicles in Colma.
- Attendees liked the idea of retaining discount retailers and thought that Colma’s locations could serve well for an “Outlet Mall.”
- An attendee voiced an idea for temporary use of vacant storefronts; to pursue “pop-up” stores. Pop-up stores are temporary stores that connect with shoppers, create buzz for products and occupy otherwise unused space for a short duration.
- The group was supportive of increasing dining opportunities within the Town. They would like to see a variety of affordable, neighborhood family restaurants in the Town.
- The focus group wanted to retain the Town’s current discount stores, but some were hesitant to support “big box” retail stores because of concerns that these types of developments would not mesh well with Colma’s “small town feel”, thus attracting an undesirable demographic.
- The group was fully supportive of any neighborhood serving commercial use. They especially supported the development of a grocery store, drug store and post office.
- A group discussed marketing ideas to promote business in Colma. As some attendees were undecided on how Colma should be marketed, others had developed mottos such as “COLMA: Eat, Shop, Play, Rest”. Some attendees thought Colma should capitalize on its uniqueness and use humor to draw shoppers.
- Other members of the group presented ideas for marketing Colma, including promoting Colma as a “film-friendly” destination.

- The focus group thought there should be a stronger pedestrian connection from the area BART stations to major shopping areas such as Serra Center and 280 Metro Center. There is the potential to develop a signage program directing pedestrians to shopping areas or perhaps a shuttle system.
- The residents from this group are hoping that the Economic Development Strategy will help fill commercial vacancies in the Town. They are ready for the strategy to get underway.
- The group anticipated that once the Economic Development Strategy is fully implemented, tax revenues will increase and their benefits will be maintained.
- The group anticipated that if the Economic Development Strategy is successful in accomplishing all the Goals, Colma would be able to provide services to the residents that will enable them to shop locally.